

# **EXHIBIT A**

# I BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW

I have been full of resentment since I was a child. My mother left my birth father when I was one year old. He was very violent and abusive. To this day I have never made contact with or spoken to him. When I was 4 years old my mother married my step father Toby. He has always been a great step Dad and a good provider, but for some reason I've always felt unwanted and unloved. I remember my first prayers to God crying, telling him I didn't want to exist. Growing up, I had a need to be accepted. I tried making friends, playing sports, tried always to fit in but always had that empty, lonely void in my heart.

At age 12 I discovered alcohol and marijuana. That's when I discovered the warm, comforting hug that I longed for. ALSO I made many new and unique friends. Finally a feeling of acceptance!

Thru-out my teenage years I embraced the punk-rock lifestyle and all that comes with it. I feel in love with the music, skateboarding, even the rebellious behavior was attractive. Enter: more drugs. Drinking alcohol, smoking pot, and taking acid was my whole life.

I completely separated myself from my family.

The pleasures of the streets totally trumped all else.

By age 21, I was a "professional partier." I played in several bands and was the head bartender at the Horseshoe, a local bar in my hometown.

My life seemed great and I felt like I had the world in the palm of my hand. It was all an illusion. A total lie.

In reality: I was a high school dropout, no driver's license, not even a place of my own to live. Then I became a

father, but here I was, still a child. Despite the odds,

I vowed to be a decent father to my son, Caleb.

I tried to make a family with Jessica, his mother.

Jessica was also an addict, and my drug dealer.

I worked and she sold drugs. Cocaine had now become the main staple in our household. It quickly destroyed any shred of this family that I was working hard to create.

By the time my son was 3, his mother was a full blown crack addict, yet I too, an addict, had to take full custody of our son. All by myself. Not once did I seek out treatment or even come to terms with reality that I was an addict. Sure I stopped all the heavy stuff, but continued drinking alcohol and smoking pot daily. I was so hyper focused on being a dad that I didn't even look at my own problems. I was depressed, withdrawn, and very angry.

After Caleb became of age my drug use progressed.

Hallucinogens and methamphetamines added more proverbial fuel to the angry fire that fueled my isolation.

I was completely withdrawn and all I did was hide in bed all day scrolling thru social media and political forums - looking at blogs or anything that could serve as an outlet for my pent up anger combined with all the pain I was suppressing.

I would bash on topics I didn't agree with, saying outrageous things to see if I could get past censorship.

Relativism without consequence. My thinking patterns were completely distorted. All this just became another addiction for me.

I continued to use drugs, drinking for days straight, high on meth, smoking pot thru-out the work week. The whole time I was lying to myself, that I didn't have a problem, I was "In control." My anger and resentment towards others only grew. Even though I have strong conservative beliefs and values, I started calling public officials whom I found disgusting, I believed they were behaving far worse than myself, and I told them how I felt.

I was already at a very low and desperate place, but doing this only brought me down further. I was not being accountable to myself or anyone for my actions.

The next thing I know I'm being raided by the F.B.I. and being accused of some very severe charges.

I was taken into custody for a short time and released on bond. I am still waiting to appear in court for threatening a senator. I've never felt so fed up and ashamed.

Even in my life-long addiction, I could always carry my burdens but this new problem I created is the bottom of the barrel for me. My eyes are wide open, and have been for nearly 90 days now - clean and sober - from any mind altering substance.

I have no control of the future, but the hard truth is that I could lose everything that worked hard to build. Being more spiritual than religious, I'm putting my faith in God. Only he and I know the integrity of my heart, and I believe he is using this unimaginable situation as an opportunity to set me back on track.

I was lead to the Jericho House a few months ago, where I have found incredible support and direction, kindness and the joy of new friends who are like minded and choose a drug-free lifestyle. This is where I began attending a variety of support groups from anger management to relapse prevention.

This is where I became aware of my cognitive thinking distortions. I had to abandon my victim mentality once and for all. I would love for this story to have a happy ending but my journey is far from over. My life has truly just begun anew. The road ahead may be bumpy, but with God and my support team by my side I feel beautiful things are on the horizon.

Joshua Russell

Governor Hobbs. I am writing you today to express the errors of my ways. Over the last few years I've allowed myself to get consumed by worldly issues and social media. I had already been abusing drugs and alcohol for a large period of my life. Social media and news reports (that I didn't know if they were true or false) became another addiction for me, and only fueled my depression, anxiety and anger.

Not only do I want to apologize I want to thank you. This situation has been a sobering experience. I have enrolled myself in anger management and twelve step courses, it also renewed my faith in Jesus. For this I thank you and I am truly sorry for my actions. I'm not a violent man, I am a broken man. No one should be the target of such disrespectful behavior. I'm now learning that I was only projecting my hurt and pain towards others. I will continue to work hard on my programs and my renewed faith.

Thank you Governor Hobbs  
I extend my deepest apology  
Joshua Russell